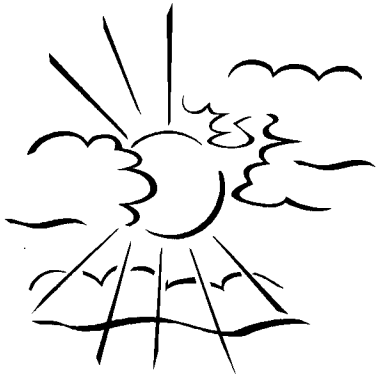


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Articles in Today's Clips

Friday, September 9, 2005

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Published September 9, 2005

Lansing maintains readiness in case evacuees need homes

Volunteers continue efforts to prepare for short-notice arrivals

By Nicole Geary
Lansing State Journal

There still were no Hurricane Katrina evacuees on their way to Lansing on Thursday, but local charities continued preparing spaces for up to 300 who may need temporary homes.

"We're just waiting to receive information and people," said Sherri Solomon, president of St. Vincent Catholic Charities, which is leading Lansing's efforts.

Michigan still intends to move Gulf Coast residents based at Battle Creek's Fort Custer to other cities as quickly as possible, said Karen Stock, spokeswoman for the state Department of Human Services.

Officials across the state were busy Thursday assessing how the evacuees' needs could be matched with more than 4,000 housing units offered by cities statewide.

Although evacuations to Michigan have stopped temporarily, more could arrive in the state on short notice, Stock said.

"The readiness is very important," she said.

Volunteers continue to arrange adoptive families and fill Lansing's available apartments with donated furniture, appliances and other necessities.

"The phones have been ringing steady," St. Vincent spokesman Cheval Breggins said.

Meanwhile, East Lansing also is poised to welcome evacuees.

Officials have identified 150 available rental units and spaces for 90 children in East Lansing Public Schools.

Contact Nicole Geary at 377-1066 or ngeary@lsj.com.

Evacuees, those giving aid in Michigan undergo few checks

Focus on saving lives and finding shelter has left little time to check for criminal records, authorities say.

September 9, 2005

By Francis X. Donnelly / The Detroit News

The plethora of hurricane evacuees who have descended upon Michigan have been met by an even bigger group of residents offering shelter.

So far, however, little background checking has been done on evacuees and benefactors, and it's unlikely to happen in the near future, state and federal officials said.

The absence of safeguards such as criminal records reviews could pose a threat to the people seeking homes in Michigan or those offering them.

"Clearly we don't want those families to be taken advantage of by scoundrels or scam artists," Gov. Jennifer Granholm said Thursday during a news conference at the Mid-Michigan Chapter of the American Red Cross in Lansing.

State officials hastened to point out that they are sending evacuees to uninhabited homes and apartments so the need for such background checks wasn't critical.

But, apart from the state, many residents are opening their homes to displaced hurricane survivors who will be living with them.

The residents are being matched with the newcomers through charity groups, many of which don't check the backgrounds of the people opening their homes.

As for the evacuees, few groups are checking their backgrounds, including the principal agency assisting them, the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

An official with FEMA said the agency has been busy with a Herculean task -- trying to pick up and move the population of an entire city.

"Right now, the focus is on saving people's lives," said FEMA spokeswoman Mary Margaret Walker.

At least one Metro Detroit resident who has offered to open her home, and life, to the out-of-towners wasn't fazed by the lack of safeguards.

Donna Staples, 41, of Grosse Pointe Park said she was more worried about whether the dispossessed would get the help they needed.

"We do feel like we're fortunate," she said about her family of four. "We have a little and they have nothing."

And so the Staples have decided to open up the brick bungalow in Detroit where they had lived until moving a year ago.

Several national and state groups have formed in response to the great need for housing and strong push by residents to provide it.

Many don't check the background of the benefactors.

One group that does, however, is Operation: Share Your Home.

The Baton Rouge group screens hurricane victims and the people helping them for criminal records.

In Michigan, state officials have received offers of 4,000 housing units from more than 30 cities. That's plenty more than the number of evacuees in the state, which is below 1,000.

Karen Stock, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Human Services, which is coordinating the housing, said she wasn't aware who was responsible for background checks.

"That's a new question," she said. "I don't know if there's any plan or provision for that."

State officials conceded that it wasn't FEMA's responsibility to check the background of homeowners.

But the federal agency also doesn't check out the background of people seeking aid, FEMA spokeswoman Walker said.

Mark Hornbeck contributed to this article. You can reach Francis X. Donnelly at (313) 223-4186 or fdonnelly@detnews.com.

Make storm victims, Detroiters more secure Grim pictures from Gulf Coast remind us to help the people who remain most vulnerable

By Ron Gettelfinger / Special to The Detroit News

New Orleans, Biloxi and other communities devastated by Hurricane Katrina are nearly 1,000 miles away from Metro Detroit. But even before disaster struck, phones started to ring in the Michigan offices of the Red Cross, United Way, Salvation Army and other charitable agencies as it was evident this hurricane was going to wreak havoc. It's still hard to conceive that a major American city is underwater and other communities have been leveled. Hundreds of thousands of people have been separated from their homes -- and their jobs. Some employers can and will keep workers on the payroll while communities rebuild. But many workers for small businesses -- some of which no longer exist -- find themselves without paychecks just as they face extraordinary expenses. In an era of stagnating wages, this disaster will stretch many families to the breaking point.

That's why it's important for victims of this tragedy to know we care. Michigan and Detroiters will respond generously, as we have in previous emergencies. The United Auto Workers is proud to stand in solidarity with our fellow citizens as we work together to help those impacted by Hurricane Katrina. And regardless of what we have done to date, we must find a way to do more.

The impulse to help those in need isn't confined to disasters that take place far away. The Detroit area has a rich tradition of caring and a network of service agencies working to meet a wide range of needs. We've been spared -- so far -- from a major natural disaster. Instead, we suffer from an accumulation of human problems -- disinvestment, urban decay, unemployment and declining wages -- which have left Detroit as the city with the highest poverty rate in the nation.

The suffering in Detroit is all the more frustrating because there is so much wealth surrounding it. Michigan's manufacturing industries have created a solid middle-class lifestyle for many -- and an even better lifestyle for some. Even as one-third of Detroiters live below the poverty line, Oakland County ranks among the top 20 nationally in per capita personal income.

UAW members have firm ideas for addressing such inequalities: a higher minimum wage, a national health care plan, new trade policies to promote American jobs and new laws to protect workers' rights.

Labor Voices

Today marks the debut of Labor Voices, a new column offering the perspectives of Michigan's top union leaders. Labor Voices will be written for The Detroit News on a rotating basis by United Auto Workers President Ron Gettelfinger, Teamster President James Hoffa, Michigan AFL-CIO President Mark Gaffney and Michigan Education Association President Lu Battaglieri. The News hopes to provide a forum for discussing workplace issues that are critical to a large segment of Michigan's population, whether or not they are union members. Look for Labor Voices every Friday in The Detroit News.

Other voices, of course, have ideas that run in the opposite direction. In fact, some readers -- and writers -- of this newspaper are convinced the UAW is part of the problem, not part of the solution.

By all means, let's have a vigorous debate about how our economy can be made to work better for everyone. But the homeless and the hungry can't wait until we are through.

All of us -- Republican and Democrat, labor and management -- have an obligation to help the less fortunate, and there are opportunities for us to share with others through the wonderful charitable, civic and religious organizations. As an example, we can give to United Way, which supports 155 nonprofit agencies in the tri-county area.

The United Way for Southeastern Michigan's annual Torch Drive, chaired by DaimlerChrysler Chief Executive Dieter Zetsche, kicks off today. More than 1,000 volunteers in Wayne, Macomb and Oakland counties will build wheelchair ramps, stock food banks and perform other community service projects.

Volunteers are needed throughout the year. You can plug in by visiting www.uwsem.org or calling (313) 226-9430.

This year's fund-raising goal for the United Way campaign is \$66.5 million. It's an ambitious target, and the task won't be made any easier by the need to respond to the Hurricane Katrina disaster.

But the help we will send to our neighbors in the South -- and we should do all that is humanly possible -- can't be allowed to diminish our efforts here at home. The grim pictures from New Orleans have shown us once again who is most vulnerable in our society: the urban poor. People of color. Children. The elderly. The disabled.

Let's all do our part to make them more secure -- and to build our collective capacity to prevent future tragedies.

Labor Voices United Auto Workers President Ron Gettelfinger was chair of the 2004 United Way Torch Drive for Southeastern Michigan. E-mail letters to letters@detnews.com.

Lansing State Journal

Editorial

Published September 9, 2005

New Hope: Shelter's open for a few more weeks; Congress must change law

As Congress looks to help the unfortunate victims of Hurricane Katrina, it should revisit a law that hurts charities nationwide - including a Lansing homeless shelter.

The Volunteers of America's New Hope Day Center has enough money to stay open until the end of the month. Generous contributions from local residents have kept New Hope in operation for several months. But that well eventually will run dry.

The real fix must come from Washington. A federal law that took effect in January laid waste to many charities' biggest source of income. The law slashed tax deductions for people donating vehicles to nonprofits, creating a huge disincentive to donate.

As a result, the VOA's vehicle donations have fallen off by about 40 percent, threatening the closure of its shelter, which serves about 100 homeless people each day.

As winter approaches, it means 100 Lansing-area homeless people could be out on the streets.

Nonprofit programs such as New Hope may actually be among the lucky. If the VOA can keep the shelter open until next summer, it's likely to get other federal assistance starting next July.

But federal aid comes and goes. The homeless problem does not. Congress needs to rewrite a law that, while adding to the U.S. treasury, has robbed nonprofits groups such as VOA of desperately needed funds.

MICHIGAN REPORT

SEPTEMBER 8, 2005

2005-06 BUDGET AGREEMENT STRUCK

Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm and the Republican-led Legislature were said by sources Thursday to have struck a long-awaited agreement on a 2005-06 budget with the two sides expected to announce the details of the spending plan Friday. That agreement, as described Thursday evening, will mean the state discontinues its youth prison in Baldwin, but keeps open the Newberry prison – perhaps the most contentious issue in the entire budget.

The deal also would mean spending increases to several public universities and no cuts to any of the schools. The Legislature had sought steep cuts to Northern Michigan and Wayne State universities.

Several details will be left to conference committees to resolve. Eventually, while possibly not announced Friday, the budget is expected to contain an enhanced co-pay for Medicaid recipients – a priority of the Legislature.

The agreement also will not cut cash assistance to welfare recipients, sources said.

But perhaps the biggest surprise from what is now known is that Ms. Granholm will succeed in her plan to discontinue the state's contract with the Youth Correctional Facility in Baldwin. Sources who spoke on background said the Legislature would pass the Department of Corrections budget with funding to run the prison, but that Republican leaders agreed to let Ms. Granholm strike the funding with a line-item veto.

The prison is privately operated and the cut would not technically close the facility, but it is unclear what would replace the state's presence.

Administration officials were reportedly "upbeat" after 2005-06 budget meetings on Thursday.

The capital was abuzz late Thursday as lobbyists and reporters tried to find out if top state officials were close to announcing an agreement on which the House and Senate can then begin to act.

The fiscal year ends on September 30, three weeks from Friday. Without an agreement by then, Ms. Granholm and the Legislature faced a politically dangerous confrontation.

Budget Director Mary Lannoye and legislative leaders have been meeting for more than a month to work out final agreements on the budget. Several weeks ago, Ms. Granholm began joining the discussions.

All along, officials have said they are making progress in their talks, but were never quite at the point of agreement. Several weeks ago a legislative source said a number of agreements on less controversial issues had been reached, but disagreements remained on issues such as cutbacks in Medicaid and whether and which prison to close.

Earlier this week, an administration official said the talks were progressing in “baby steps.”

But Thursday the meetings lasted from noon until 3 p.m., took a short break, then resumed. Sometime after 4 p.m., the meetings were reportedly adjourned but new discussions were to start Friday.

Ms. Lannoye was described as “upbeat” by the talks, and rumors that an agreement was imminent began to quickly spread through the area.

Officials hope the Legislature will finish work on the budget by Friday, September 23, allowing Ms. Granholm and her staff enough time to review the bills before they are signed.

MIRS

Thursday, September 8, 2005

Budget Agreement Reached

As of this evening, the administration and legislative leaders had reached a tentative agreement on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 budget that will spare Northern Michigan University, Wayne State University and the Newberry prison from cuts.

A Friday morning press conference is being put together at which Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM**, Senate Majority Leader Ken **SIKKEMA** (R-Wyoming) and House Speaker Craig **DeROCHE** (R-Novi) would announce a deal that doesn't immediately implement a 48-month timeframe in which some welfare recipients would receive cash assistance but does set up pilot programs. Some of the Republicans' Medicaid reforms have been agreed to as well.

The Baldwin prison is likely out. Under the agreement, the House and Senate will approve a Department of Corrections budget that saves the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility (MYCF) from the chopping block, but the way the budget is structured, the Governor is expected to line-item veto its funding.

The \$175-per-pupil increase in the K-12 per pupil funding makes the budget as well.

To balance the budget, both sides allegedly found new revenue from land sales and other pots of money. Apparently, the budget is going to be balanced without any new fee or tax increases, but the sum of the details on the revenue may not be completely ironed out. Today's deal reflects a situation where the House, Senate and administration had to come to agreements on the "target spending."

The deal comes after rapid action the last few days. The Legislature — under a tight deadline to logistically get the budget through the meat grinder — can now take two weeks to pass a budget (one week per chamber). The administration would theoretically have the last week in September to review and sign the document.

Other budget highlights include avoiding cuts to NMU and WSU, which the Legislature had suggested cutting by 10 and 5 percent, respectively. However, elements of the House Republicans' "WIN" Program are reportedly built into the agreement as well.

The Newberry Correctional Facility is staying open, which is what Granholm and U.P. lawmakers had been fighting hard for.

Budget Deal Off, For Now

Senate Majority Leader Ken SIKKEMA (R-Wyoming) called off the tentative agreement legislative and administrative leaders had Thursday evening on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 budget after a working agreement sent to the leader's office included items he apparently did not sign off on.

A Senate spokesman would not indicate what, specifically, Sikkema objected to in the draft copy of the FY 2006 budget agreement, saying only that his issues with the document he was given around 9 a.m. this morning were numerous.

The Senate spokesman also noted that while the Legislature intends to pass a Department of Corrections (DOC) budget that funds the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility (MYCF), Sikkema is not doing so under the understanding that Gov. Jennifer GRANHOLM will use her line-item veto power to nix it. Apparently, the thinking is that the governor will agree to other cuts in the DOC budget that will save the state's only privately run prison, which is located in Lake County.

Granholt Press Secretary Liz BOYD said she currently has no press conference scheduled for today.

MIRS will update the situation as more details become available.

Gongwer
September 9, 2005

BUDGET AGREEMENT HITS SNAG

An agreement in principle on the 2005-06 budget struck Thursday by Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm and the Republican-controlled Legislature came undone Friday morning.

Senate Republican spokesperson John Long said as of about 9 a.m. there was not an agreement on the budget because the Granholm administration has claimed agreement exists on budget areas where no consensus occurred. "The administration included several items that were not agreed to," he said of a letter to legislative leaders from Ms. Granholm.

Republican legislative leaders met with Budget Director Mary Lannoye this morning to go over the written version of the agreement when Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema (R-Wyoming) voiced displeasure with some aspects of the written document. He and Ms. Lannoye left the room separately shortly afterward.

Mr. Long insisted there was still disagreement over the fate of the Youth Correctional Facility in Baldwin. Sources said Thursday there was an agreement that the facility would be in the Corrections budget, but that the governor would veto that item. Mr. Long said there was no such agreement.

"That language will be in the budget," he said. "It's a needed facility and it's a critical job provider in Northwest Michigan."

Mr. Long said there was nothing legislative leaders could do to prevent Ms. Granholm from vetoing the funding, but he said both Mr. Sikkema and House Speaker Craig DeRoche (R-Nov) were urging her to find the \$18 million from the \$1.8 billion Corrections budget.

Despite the problems Friday, one source said it was more likely than not that the budget agreement would still be announced during the day.

Michigan Report Special Update, Friday, September 9, 2005, 10:27 am

BUDGET AGREEMENT BACK ON

Administration and legislative leaders have apparently resolved their final differences over the agreement on the 2005-06 budget.

Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema (R-Wyoming) will speak to reporters at 11 a.m. about the agreement.

The final resolutions involved issues that were “not major,” one spokesperson said.

Ice Cream Man Allegedly Shows Porn To Children

36-Year-Old's Cell Phone Searched By Sheriff's Deputies

POSTED: 1:15 pm EDT September 8, 2005

An ice cream truck driver is accused of offering free ice cream to children in a Macomb Township neighborhood in exchange for obscene photographs.

Michael Wesley Cain (pictured, right), 36, of Detroit, was arraigned on two counts of accosting children for immoral purposes, a four-year felony; and two counts of exhibiting obscenity to children, a 90-day misdemeanor, according to the Macomb County Sheriff's Department. Sheriff's deputies were called to the area of 21 Mile and Garfield roads about an ice cream truck driver showing pornographic photographs to young girls. The driver allegedly showed nude photographs of himself on his cell phone to the children, and asked the girls to kiss each other so he could photograph them, the sheriff's department said.

The girls were offered free ice cream if they complied with the man's requests, according to the sheriff's department. They told authorities that the incident has occurred before.

The girls provided deputies with a description of the truck, but did not have a license plate number. Deputies were not able to locate the truck in the immediate area.

Additional deputies were informed of the incident and the truck was discovered Tuesday in the area of 21 Mile and Tilch roads, the sheriff's department said. The driver was identified as Cain and was confronted about the allegations.

Cain allowed deputies to search his cell phone, and they discovered naked photographs of the man, which were consistent with information from witnesses, the sheriff's department said. Cain was taken into custody.

A bond was set at \$20,000 during Cain's arraignment. A preliminary examination was scheduled for Sept. 20.

Anyone who may have had contact with the suspect is asked to contact the Macomb County Sheriff's Department at (586) 307-9358.

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The ice cream man's a suspect

Charges say he tried to lure kids

September 9, 2005

BY CHRISTY ARBOSCELLO

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Behind the cheery music and cold sweets lurked an ice cream man with sinister intentions, according to the Macomb County Sheriff's Office.

The driver who cruised Macomb Township allegedly showed pictures of himself naked to children and asked girls to kiss each other so he could photograph them with his camera phone. He bribed them with goodies, detectives said Thursday.

Michael Wesley Cain, 36, of Detroit was arraigned Wednesday in 41A District Court in Shelby Township on two felony counts of accosting children for immoral purposes and two misdemeanor counts of exhibiting obscenity to children.

Detectives are continuing to investigate Cain's alleged activities on the ice cream route.

"For now, at least he's off the streets," said Sheriff's Detective Sgt. Larry King.

Sheriff Mark Hackel said Cain was working for the Detroit-based Motor City Ice Cream Co.

Representatives of the company could not be reached Thursday.

While it's not rare for child predators to seek jobs that place them near young people, an adult presence at all times lessens the chance that children will be taken advantage of, Hackel advised.

A caller tipped authorities off to the activities allegedly going on at the truck.

On Tuesday, deputies found it in the 21 Mile and Tilch area and questioned Cain. He complied with their request to look at his cell phone, where, deputies said, they found nude pictures of Cain.

Cain was arrested and lodged in the Macomb County Jail in lieu of a \$20,000 bond. If convicted, Cain could get more than four years in prison.

Hackel said Cain served time in prison for 1994 armed robbery and firearms convictions.

Anyone with information about the case may call the Macomb County Sheriff's Office detective bureau at 586-307-9358 anytime.

Contact CHRISTY OYAMA-ARBOSCELLO at 586-469-8085 or arboscello@freepress.com.

Michigan gets tougher on sex offenders

New push to keep molesters away from children draws criticism from rights advocates.

By Ron French / The Detroit News

Friday, September 9, 2005

Michigan is joining a growing list of states cracking down on convicted sex offenders, who are being identified, tracked and banned from neighborhoods years after their release from prison.

Bills passed last week in the Michigan Legislature that in part ban sex offenders from living or working within 1,000 feet of schools or day care centers typify the trend. Popular among parents and almost impossible to vote against as a politician, the laws are intended to protect children from predators. But critics say there is no proof the laws protect anyone and plenty of evidence that they infringe on the civil rights of people who have already served their sentences.

The new Michigan laws, which Gov. Jennifer Granholm has promised to sign, will affect more than 20,000 people.

In addition to limiting where sex offenders can live and work, the laws require background checks for school and day care employees and penalize workers who don't report past convictions.

The new statutes demonstrate how sex offender registries are rapidly evolving into starting points for additional regulation. In a local example, police departments in Metro Detroit have begun performing sweeps of offenders' homes to make sure they are properly registered. In some states, sex offenders are tracked by satellite.

"This is an easy group to pick on. I have a daughter -- I don't like predators," said Thomas Lazar, a Bingham Farms lawyer who has represented sex offenders fighting Michigan's registry. "But this has become a real witch hunt."

Though a few states have had sex offender registries for decades, the current movement began in 1994 when New Jersey girl Megan Kanka was abducted and killed by a convicted sex offender who lived in her neighborhood.

Michigan created a sex offender registry that year. Federal legislation that created a national registry, generically called "Megan's Law," was passed in 1996.

Michigan's registry includes those convicted of a wider range of crimes than the sex offender lists of many states. There are more than 37,000 offenders on the list, with about 20,000 of those names available on a public-accessible registry (those not on the list are incarcerated, younger than 18 or have moved out of state). Residents can look up offenders by name or search their community for sex offenders by ZIP code on the Internet at Residents also can go to police stations to use the registry.

Yet by today's standards, Michigan is considered "behind the curve" by Parents for Megan's Law, a national advocacy group. The group gave Michigan's registry a failing grade in a recent

report card of state sex offender lists, criticizing Michigan for not contacting residents when a convicted sex offender moves into the neighborhood and for not providing a toll-free number for residents without computers to access the registry.

Other states have surpassed Michigan in identification, tracking and limiting the movement of sex offenders. For example:

- Florida, Oklahoma, Missouri and Ohio approved laws this year to allow lifetime electronic monitoring of high-risk sex offenders through Global Positioning Systems, which is used with a device the offender wears.
- At least 14 states already have "safety zones" around schools and day cares. Convicted sex offenders generally are not allowed to live or work within those zones. Iowa's "safety zone" is the largest, at 2,000 feet.
- Wisconsin, Florida and Louisiana either require or allow police to personally notify neighbors when a sex offender lives nearby.

Liz Boyd, spokeswoman for the Michigan governor, said changes in laws dealing with sex offenders is a natural evolution. In a similar fashion, drunken driving laws have grown harsher in the past two decades as attitudes about drinking evolved.

"There is no tolerance for sex offenders," Boyd said. "We're interested in protecting kids."

But John La Fond, law professor at University of Missouri and author of "Preventing Sexual Violence: How Society Should Cope with Sex Offenders," argues that such laws are window-dressing that do little to make children safe.

Sex crimes have dropped dramatically since 1992 -- declining 39 percent between 1993 and 2003 nationally -- during the same period in which fears of such crimes have increased. Proponents could argue that the decline in sex crimes is a sign that sex offender registries work.

Not so, says La Fond. "State governments are under increasing pressure to keep intensive tabs on sex offenders," La Fond said. "But there is no research I'm aware of that shows registration or notification either deters (sex offenses) or aids in their successful prosecution."

Registries and tracking of sex offenders focus attention on the dangers of strangers. But in reality, about 80 percent of sex crimes are committed by people the victim knows well.

"The greatest threat comes from someone you socialize with or someone you may even have in your home," La Fond said.

Changes in laws are being driven by fear generated by a few highly publicized child molestation cases, La Fond said.

In Florida, the Jessica Lunsford Act, passed in the weeks following the abduction and murder of a 9-year-old Florida girl by a convicted sex offender, requires sex offenders to wear tracking devices for life.

"It becomes an arms race," La Fond said. "Politicians must respond to what other politicians do" or they look soft on crime.

Boyd bristles at the suggestion that Michigan's safety zone, first proposed by Granholm, is about political gain.

"This is not about one-upmanship," Boyd said. "This is not a political issue. It's a public safety issue. It's one of the core values people expect of their public officials."

Sen. Alan Cropsey, R-DeWitt, says changes in the treatment of sex offenders reflect the public's feelings about the crimes. The sex offender registry "has gotten more victim-friendly," Cropsey said.

The laws aren't friendlier to Ron Fabian. The 56-year-old Jackson man was convicted of a misdemeanor sex offense in 1999 and has been on the state registry ever since. He is a lawyer and past president of the Jackson County Bar Association.

"Forget the fairness issue -- this isn't going to serve its purpose," said Fabian. "This will do nothing to keep children safer."

The state's list includes people convicted of crimes such as urinating in public and teens convicted of having sex with underage partners, even though some have had those convictions wiped off the record through a separate state program. Yet everyone on the sex offender registry would be barred from living, working or loitering near schools. "Sex offenders are the new bogeyman," Fabian said. "Politicians want to get votes. Fear equals votes. We don't have communists anymore, so we have sex offenders."

Sex offenders get little sympathy from Cropsey, who has a strong law-and-order reputation in the Legislature. "When you're talking about somebody who's committed a rape or molested a child, they're lucky to be alive."

The Wayne County Sheriff's Department, the state police and 12 police departments in Western Wayne County recently performed sweeps of the homes of convicted sex offenders, checking to see if they were living at the addresses listed in the registry.

The sweeps were intended to remind offenders that they are being supervised, said Sheriff's Department spokesman John Roach. Media outlets were invited to tag along on the sweeps that, according to a press release, were "timed to protect children as they head back to school."

La Fond says such efforts are "futile gestures to reassure the public that they are safer but will have little impact. Florida will spend an estimated \$4 million per year tracking offenders by satellite.

La Fond suggests that money could be better spent on less flashy, lower-tech methods of preventing sex crimes. He recommends states spend their money on additional counselors for sex offenders in prison and probation officers and polygraph operators for those who've been released.

And in Michigan, efforts should be focused not on the 37,000 people on Michigan's sex offender registry, but on a few thousand high-risk offenders, La Fond said.

"We have a moral responsibility to stop as many sex crimes as possible," La Fond said. "But we have to use our money wisely."

You can reach Ron French at (313) 222-2175 or rfrench@detnews.com.

Girl arraigned in stabbing death of 14-year-old

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Friday, September 09, 2005

By Ken Palmer kpalmer@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6313

A pregnant teenager has been arraigned on a murder charge in the stabbing death of a 14-year-old girl during a fight over a boy.

Slumped in front of the video monitor at the Genesee County Jail, Cachet T. Dent, 17, told Flint District Judge Michael D. McAra on Wednesday that she understood the charge against her.

McAra ordered her held without bond pending a pre-trial hearing today.

Dent, of Mt. Morris Township, faces a second-degree murder charge in the death of Dequandra L. Holden during a fight involving a group of young women at 1609 Welch Blvd. about 10 p.m. Sunday.

Holden and Dent were fighting when Dent grabbed a knife from the ground and stabbed the younger girl three times, Flint police Sgt. Shawn Murphy told McAra.

Holden was taken to Hurley Medical Center with stab wounds to the chest, shoulder and armpit area and died in the emergency room, police said.

Holden was a ninth-grade honors student at Southwestern Academy, family members said.

The two girls apparently were fighting over a boy, the family said.

"We still haven't figured out what happened yet," said Annetta Cooper, Dequandra Holden's aunt. "There were a whole bunch of girls on a porch, and (people thought) they were playing.

"Everybody was up on the porch and nobody did nothing to stop them. That's what was so puzzling. We can't figure out what's going on."

Holden lived with her grandmother, Sylvia Holden, who raised her, Cooper said. She participated in school programs and was on the cheerleading squad last school year, the family said.

Holden's funeral is set for 1 p.m. Saturday at Macedonia Baptist Church, 5443 N. Saginaw St., Mt. Morris Township.

Besides her aunt and grandmother Holden leaves her mother, Danica Davis; father, Darrell Holden; and brothers Dequan Davis and Demetrius Williams II.

Three other people were slain over the Labor Day weekend in Flint, including an elderly man who allegedly was shot by his wife.

Addie L. Calhoun, 74, was arraigned on a murder charge Tuesday in the death of Jesse T. Calhoun, 73.

Witnesses said the couple had been arguing before the fatal confrontation early Saturday on Alexander Street near Dayton Street, police and prosecutors said.

Jesse Calhoun was sitting on the porch with a gun in his hand when his wife walked around the side of the house with another gun, they said.

The couple resumed arguing on the porch before Addie Calhoun shot her husband once in the chest, authorities said. The woman dropped the gun and sat down until police arrived, they said.

A pretrial hearing for Addie Calhoun was set for today.

Judge: Teen Accused Of Stabbing Mom Fit For Trial

Mother Found Dead April 25

POSTED: 10:22 am EDT September 8, 2005

ROCHESTER HILLS, Mich. -- A judge has ruled that a Rochester Hills teenager accused of stabbing his mother 111 times is competent to stand trial.

A judge said Christopher Dankovic, 15, is fit to stand trial after a forensic report by Michigan State Police psychiatrists.

Dankovich has been charged as an adult with open murder. He is accused of stabbing his mother, Diane Michele, whose body was found partially covered by a tarp in her home in the 3000 block of Palm Aire Drive on April 25.

Michele suffered 111 stab wounds and blunt force trauma, according to the Oakland County Medical Examiner.

"The victim was stabbed 111 times in the chest, the back, and even the eyes," said Kelly Chard, assistant prosecutor.

Dankovich, a freshman at Rochester Adams High School, was taken into custody at the family's cabin in Roscommon County, in northern lower Michigan, later that day. Police said the teen had apparently packed some survival gear that was discovered in the area of the cabin, according to Local 4 reports.

Dankovich has been held without bond in a juvenile detention center. He could face life in prison if convicted of the charges.

Kalamazoo Gazette

Letters

September 9, 2005

County officials must revamp budget

Kalamazoo County commissioners continue to propose increases in spending. But, they will not spend to build an expanded jail or juvenile home. Apparently, they view every current expense as more important than the expense of a new juvenile home and an improved jail. All spending decisions they make are perfect in every way. No money is available for anything, except the old programs and staff currently in the budget, not even such primary responsibilities such as jails and juvenile homes.

However, they view every penny in the taxpayer's budget as a county resource. Commissioners believe that citizens should plan for tax increases, even though the county cannot plan ahead to replace or expand the tools they need to do their job, such as a jail or a juvenile home.

The judiciary does not want to help, either. They continue overstaffed and will not work overtime to clear the backlog of untried cases. Only 25 percent of the jail is filled with tried and sentenced prisoners. People who await trial fill 75 percent of the beds in the jail. When overcrowding occurs, the sheriff must look to see who can be released.

It's time that county commissioners and judges look at their budgets and determine if the jail or juvenile home takes priority over some current expenditures.

Phillip Settles

Steering Committee

Kalamazoo County Taxpayers Association

Portage

Published September 9, 2005

Experts: Monitor guardian accounts Eaton Co. case highlights gap in court system

By Kelly Hassett
Lansing State Journal

Knowing how much money you have and keeping track of where it goes is the best way to protect yourself against estate and elder fraud, legal experts say.

The case of former Eaton County court guardian Charles M. Zwick - who's accused of mishandling more than \$630,000 from two elderly Lansing women - shows a gap in a system that's designed to protect people when they're most vulnerable.

Whether families manage their own estates or have court-appointed guardians, - such as Zwick - they need to stay involved in how their money is managed, experts say.

"People need to think long and hard about who they really trust," said Cherie Mollison, a director in the Michigan Office of Services for the Aging.

"Money makes people funny."

Most of Zwick's clients were vulnerable - they were unable to make decisions about their finances for medical, physical or other reasons.

In those cases, it's up to other family members, friends or the ward of the person's estate to make sure they stay involved with what a guardian does, said Mike Kutas, Eaton County's circuit and probate courts administrator.

They can do that by reviewing:

- An inventory report of the person's assets that conservators must file soon after they're appointed.
- Yearly accounting reports.
- The person's case file - which is a public record and can be found at the county courthouse.

"Family members have a right to review that paperwork that's filed with the court, and they should," Kutas said.

"If something doesn't look right, please bring it to our attention."

The court monitors the inventory reports filed by guardians. In Zwick's case, the court discovered that as of

Timeline in the Charles M. Zwick case

- June 9: Family of Wilma Southwell, through attorney Philip Vilella, files a request for Eaton County court guardian Charles M. Zwick to account for nearly \$350,000 in missing money from the deceased Lansing woman's estate.
- July 22: Zwick, 56, fails to appear for a probate court hearing in Judge Michael Skinner's courtroom on the allegation.
- Aug. 9: After giving Zwick time to respond or object to the Southwell claim, Skinner signs a judgment against him for \$347,304.26.
- Aug. 10: Skinner signs an arrest warrant for Zwick on charges of failure to appear and breach of fiduciary duty.
- Aug. 14: Zwick is arrested in St. Joseph by local police, who pull him over after he makes an improper right turn.
- Aug. 19: The family of Alice Grahn - Southwell's sister - files another complaint alleging Zwick took about \$285,000 from Grahn's accounts. Skinner signs a judgment against Zwick the same day.
- Sept. 2: Attorneys agree on a Nov. 8 trial date in the Southwell case. Special prosecutor Frank Reynolds says he's investigating the possibility of a contempt charge in the Grahn case.

June, Zwick was delinquent in filing reports on about 32 of the roughly 157 cases he handled, Kutas said.

The family of sisters Wilma Southwell and Alice Grahn accused former conservator Zwick, 56, of taking more than \$630,000 from the women's accounts and never explaining where the money went.

On Sept. 2, attorneys set a Nov. 8 trial date in the Southwell case for the Charlotte attorney, who's in Eaton County Jail on \$400,000 bond on a contempt charge for breach of fiduciary duty. Special prosecutors assigned to the case also are investigating a contempt charge in the Grahn case.

Zwick - who's also the target of a criminal probe by Eaton County prosecutors and the FBI - cannot be reached for comment because Eaton County Jail does not take phone messages. As of Thursday, he had not responded to a letter seeking comment sent to him in jail. His attorney, John Deming, also declined comment.

For families who don't need a court-appointed guardian, it's important to set up a financial plan for elderly or sick parents and establish a power of attorney before a crisis happens, when emotions can trump logic, said Mollison, who's chairwoman of the National Guardianship Foundation.

"The whole notion of good guardianship is that you need to make the decision for that person the way (he or she) would have made it if (he or she) were able," she said. "Some of the most horrible things happen by people you thought you could trust."

Information packets about how to apply for a guardian or conservator - as well as alternatives such as forming trusts, joint ownership of certain assets or appointing a health care power of attorney - are available in Eaton County's probate court offices.

Christine Waichunas, Eaton County's new court guardian, emphasized that court-appointed attorneys should be a last resort.

"There are a number of things that don't require a \$150 filing fee (for a guardian) and court time," she said.

Mollison said that the majority of guardians are doing a good job, and it's not often that cases such as those involving Zwick occur. "But when they happen, they're pretty bad," she said.

Contact Kelly Hassett at 267-1301 or khassett@lsj.com.

To learn more

- For more information about guardianship, go to: www.guardianship.org
- For more information about how to check inventory or accounting reports at the Eaton County Courthouse, call (517) 543-7500.

Friday, September 9, 2005

Advocates fight cuts in food stamps Local groups say 4,000 Michiganians could lose aid if Congress OKs plan to reduce federal program.

By Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News

Local advocates for food assistance are calling on Congress today to refrain from cutting the federal food stamp program that could affect nearly 4,000 Michigan residents.

Most of the people in the state who would be affected by the proposed cuts are the working poor: people who have jobs, but still struggle to make ends meet.

"In Michigan, where we've had a really stagnant economy, food stamps have been a really important safety net to help people get through this time," said Terri Stangl of the Center for Civil Justice in Saginaw.

At issue is the federal House and Senate Agriculture Committee's expected decision next week on how to cut \$3 billion over five years from programs under its jurisdiction. Those programs include food stamps, agricultural subsidies and conservation programs.

Nearly one in 10 Michigan residents receives food stamps, including the elderly, disabled and poor, and the number of those who rely on them has grown 75 percent since 2000. Like other states, Michigan also is assisting hurricane evacuees, including providing them with food.

But the Bush administration is proposing to eliminate a state option that allows Michigan and 10 other states to offer food stamps to families with incomes slightly over the poverty line, by factoring in some household expenses.

For instance, a family of four with both parents working 40 hours a week earning \$6.25 an hour could receive \$48 per month in food stamps if their rent, heat and electricity adds up to \$550. But under proposed cuts, this family would no longer qualify.

"Food assistance is one of the things that keeps people out of poverty," said Marianne Udow, director of the Michigan Department of Human Services. "These are not people who are well off; they are just over the poverty line. Without food assistance, they will slip into poverty and be on the streets and need more homeless shelters, more food banks, and those are services that already are stretched, especially with the victims of Hurricane Katrina."

Dorothy Omar, a married mother of six children, would be among those families whose food stamps would be threatened under the proposed cuts. Her husband works full time as a driver for

Food stamps in Michigan

- More than 1 million state residents receive food stamps, or nearly one out of every 10 residents.

- On average they receive 88 cents per meal, or \$237.40 to feed a family of three for a month.

- Of the households that receive food stamps, 51 percent include children, 17 percent have a senior citizen, 32 percent include someone with a disability and 5 percent include a nondisabled, non-elderly adult.

Source: "Food Stamps: Supporting Healthy Families and Communities in Michigan"

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a preschool program, while she works at an after-school program and at an adult foster care home. Losing food stamps would be difficult on the Saginaw family's already tight budget. "Most of the jobs here only hire you part time, don't offer you benefits, then don't pay enough," said Omar, 35. "By the time you get your paycheck, buy personal needs, diapers, pay bills and put gas in your car, by that time there is nothing left over to buy food."

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Medicaid cuts could hurt mentally ill Proposal would trim patient treatment, official says

By Katherine Hutt Scott
State Journal correspondent

WASHINGTON - A proposal to trim \$10 billion from the federal Medicaid budget over the next five years could result in less treatment for 11,000 mental health patients in mid-Michigan, a Lansing health official told a congressional panel Thursday.

The budget cuts could mean patients would have to pay more for treatment and have access to fewer medicines and support services. That would drive some patients away from treatment, said Robert Sheehan, executive director of the Community Mental Health Authority of Clinton, Eaton and Ingham counties.

Such an impact could be seen within weeks among his patients, who include substance abusers and the mentally ill.

"The deterioration of a patient is pretty rapid," Sheehan testified before the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. "They end up in a jail, or in a homeless shelter or losing their home or dropping out of school."

Medicaid, a jointly funded federal-state health program for the poor, accounts for two-thirds of the mental health authority's \$69 million budget, Sheehan said. The authority provides treatment at 35 sites for 11,000 patients.

The committee listened to Sheehan and six other health experts in its fourth hearing this year on how to change Medi-caid to curb its increasing costs.

A nonbinding 2006 budget plan that Congress approved earlier this year called for the \$10 billion cut. That would slow Medi-caid's growth rate over five years, committee spokesman Kevin Schweers said.

Sheehan opposes three proposals for achieving the cut:

- Asking patients to pay more for treatment.
- Restricting the medicines that patients can receive.
- Cutting the services of social workers who ensure that mental health patients have housing, employment and other health care.

The first two proposals came from the National Governors Association, a bipartisan group of state executives. The third came from the federal Department of Health and Human Services. Committee Chairman Joe Barton, R-Texas, said he hopes that within the next few weeks, the committee will approve legislation that is similar to many of the governors' proposals.

If Congress does nothing, Barton said, hundreds of thousands of people would lose their Medicaid coverage next year because cash-strapped states are limiting eligibility for the program.

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Lansing State Journal

Letters

September 9, 2005

Use four-day week

State government and other large employers in the Lansing area could lower their employees' commuting costs and enhance their own public image by simply allowing a different work schedule for its workers. Hospitals and other smaller employers have been wise to this idea for some time.

This bright idea is to change to a four-day work week and a 10-hour work day. It would save workers 20 percent in driving costs, a considerable amount at today's gasoline prices.

On top of that, such a move would constitute a positive conservation measure. It saves money and saves fuel, and still preserves the 40-hour work week.

Employers: please think about it. It's a win-win proposition!

Ernest B. Mullings

Lansing

Friday, September 9, 2005

Alfonso Lawrence Brown Jr., Southfield: Activist aided troubled youths

By Doug Guthrie / The Detroit News

After former 36th District Judge Greg Mathis became a national personality with his Chicago-based Judge Mathis television show, he knew whom he could count on back in Detroit to run a foundation to help youth overcome poverty, drugs and violence.

"Al Brown and I were lifelong friends," Mathis said. "We were kind of street kids together. Both of us got in trouble as young adults. We both turned our lives around and went to college ... We both (had) lived on the bottom side of life. He knew what it takes to uplift our community."

Alfonso Lawrence Brown Jr. of Southfield was shot to death Thursday, Sept. 1, 2005, during an attempted carjacking as he was dropping off a co-worker at the man's home on Parkside, near Palmer Park, in Detroit. He was 50.

Police have not made any arrests in the case.

Mr. Brown was a radio talk show producer in the 1980s and 1990s and well known in Detroit political, civic and entertainment circles. He founded Art Impact Marketing Inc. in 1998 and launched a local entertainment magazine called Sound & Vision

In 2004, he was named director of The Judge Greg Mathis Empowerment Foundation and he turned an abandoned home in Mathis' childhood neighborhood into a shelter for young recovering drug addicts. The foundation has been buying other properties in an effort to control crime in the neighborhood.

The foundation counsels youths ages 17-25 about career and job opportunities, education, job training and job placement. The foundation also has opened four preschools in Detroit.

"I have mixed emotions about this; another senseless, random act of violence in Detroit," said Mathis, who was expected to attend Mr. Brown's funeral today. "I feel anger while also trying to keep the faith. It just reinforces the notion that we have a lot of work to do."

Mr. Brown worked as a hairstylist in the family-owned salon and later taught cosmetology at Kettering High School before getting into radio.

He was a member of Blacks in Advertising Radio and Television and the Detroit Chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists. He was a lifetime member of the NAACP and vice president of the Metropolitan Arts Complex Inc., sponsor of the Afro-American Music Festival in Detroit.

Survivors include his wife, Michelle; a son, Christopher, three daughters, LaMona Young, Twila Tucker, and Ashanna Brown, his father, Alfonso L. Brown Sr.; stepmother, Esther Brown; and five sisters.

Funeral services were to be held at 10:30 a.m. today at Christian Tabernacle Church, 26555 Franklin Road in Southfield.

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